

Gender Based Violence

Sexual Offences

One of the innovations introduced into the Penal code in 2007 was a broadening of the definition of rape, with the result that “rape” now includes other forms of sexual coercion and the exploitation of the victim’s poor mental condition or inability to resist the action or to realise its significance. Allowance is made for heavier punishments, firstly, if the victim is a child under the age of 18, secondly if the violence committed by the perpetrator is of major proportions and thirdly if the offence is committed in a way that inflicts particularly serious pain or injury.

Prostitution

In 2010 the purchasing of prostitution was made punishable by law, through changes in the general penal code. (Article No. 206). It is illegal to advertise and to benefit from prostitution, e.g. through pimping and other means.

Strip Clubs

In 2010, a full ban on strip clubs was enacted with a change in the act on restaurants, accommodations and entertainment (No. 85/2007), banning profiting from nudity.

Violence in Close Relationships

In June of 2011 the parliament approved a law (No. 85 2011) that improves the provisions that authorities have to protect victims of domestic violence. This law provides provisions authorizing the removal of the party accused for domestic violence from the household and putting in place a specific restraining order should there be a suspicion of domestic violence.

See: <http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/Reports/nr/33208>

Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons

Since 1996 discrimination on the grounds of “sexual orientation” is subject to penalty under the General Penal Code. The same year, registered partnership between same-sex couples was given the same legal status as marriage except for certain limitations regarding adoptions. In 2010 this difference between marriages and registered partnerships was abolished, and the Marriage Act now applies to both heterosexual and same-sex couples. In recent years the need to improve the situation of transgender persons in Iceland has been emphasised resulting in a new legislation on the rights of transgender persons to sex reassignment surgery.



The Centre for Gender Equality
Borgum v Norðurslóð
Akureyri
Iceland

GENDER EQUALITY IN ICELAND 2014

Iceland has topped the World Economic Forum's list on the Global Gender Gap for the last five years. The main reasons are women's strong political position, high level of education and good health care. Women were 40% of the parliamentarians after the elections in 2013. Women are 40% of the members of local governments. Women make up more than two thirds of university students and their numbers as university teachers are growing rapidly. *See: www.gender.is*

Recent Stepping Stones

In 2008 the law on gender equality (no. 10/2008) was amended and for the first time an article on quotas was included. This article (no. 15) stipulates that when designating members for governmental or municipal committees, councils and boards, the ratio of women on men needs to be as equal as possible and where the members are more than three, the percentage can not be below 40% of either sex.

In 2009 the purchasing of sexual services was made illegal. It is illegal to advertise and to benefit from prostitution, e.g. through pimping and other means. In 2010 a full ban on strip clubs was enacted, banning the profiting from nudity.

In 2010 an amendment to the laws on public limited companies and private limited companies, obligated companies that have over 50 employees to have both women and men on their company boards and if the board-members are more than three, the percentage of women or men can not be under 40%. These changes took effect in September 2013.

In 2011 the parliament approved a law that improves the provisions that authorities have to protect victims of violence in close relationships. This law provides provisions authorizing the removal of the party accused for domestic violence from the household and putting in place a specific restraining order should there be a suspicion of domestic violence.

Legal Framework

Constitution

Since 1995 the principle of gender equality has been specifically addressed in a provision in the Constitution of the Republic of Iceland, stating that men and women are to have equal rights in every respect.

Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men

Iceland has had a special statute intended to ensure equality between women and men and their equal status in all respects since 1976. The current Gender Equality Act dates from 2008. The aim of the act is to establish and maintain equal status and equal opportunities for women and men, and thus promote gender equality in all spheres of society. All individuals shall have equal opportunities to benefit from their own enterprise and to develop their skills irrespective of gender. The minister for gender equality is preparing a new act on anti-discrimination where gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion, origin etc., are included.

See: <http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/acts-of-Parliament/nr/4203>

Government Policies:

Plan of Action on Gender Equality

In 2011 the parliament approved a new Plan of Action on Gender Equality for the period 2011-2014. The plan is split into thematic areas. This is done to ensure that some particular themes: like gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, will be implemented by all ministries. The objective of this approach is to ensure fuller and widespread implementation of gender mainstreaming. Other thematic areas of the action plan include: government, the labour market, reconciliation of work and family life, the gender pay gap, political representation, gender-based violence, education, engaging men in gender equality and international cooperation.

See: <http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/newsinenglish/nr/33182>

Gender Responsive Budgeting

In early 2009 the Minister of Finance appointed a working group on gender responsive budgeting. In accordance with the working group's suggestions the Minister of Finance requested all ministries to propose pilot projects to coincide with the 2011 budget. Results of these projects were presented in the bill for the 2013 and 2014 budget in accordance with a three years plan approved by the government. In order to raise the awareness of the government sector on this topic, the ministry has held many training seminars and published two handbooks in cooperation with the Centre for Gender Equality, which is the official institution responsible for implementing policies on gender equality.

Action Plan against Human Trafficking

In 2009 the government approved its first Action Plan against Human Trafficking. The objective of the Action Plan is to enhance the coordination of actions that are necessary in order to prevent human trafficking in Iceland, and to further study trafficking in human beings. Furthermore, it specifies actions that are aimed at prevention and education regarding this matter, as well as securing that aid and protection to victims is provided. The second Action Plan is now in place.

Plan of Action to Deal with Domestic and Sexual Violence

In 2006 the government launched its first action plan containing 37 actions to fight sexual and domestic violence. The chief objective of the plan was to combat violence in close relationships and sexual violence directed towards women and children and to improve services for victims of such violence and those who are at risk. The Ministry of Welfare presented in early 2011 a final report on the plan of action and its results, which were followed up with numerous actions. A new five year action plan is on the way. It will be based on the lessons learned, and based on the Istanbul Convention. It will also stress awareness raising and education both for the public and those working in the field of violence.

Working Group on Gender Equality on the Labour Market

In 2012 a new project on gender equality on the labour market started. It is based on recommendations from working groups on bridging the gender pay gap, reconciliation of family and work and a plan, on how to engage men in gender equality work.

Parental Leave

The parental leave system from the year 2000 provides parents with 9 months paid parental leave. The plan is to lengthen the leave step by step to 12 months, five months for the mother, five for the father and two months to share. The months earmarked for the mother and father, are not transferable.

Initially the leave provided parents, who had been working full time, 80% of their salary. This innovation was immediately well received by fathers and very quickly close to 90% used their paternal leave. Research has shown that this has had the following effects: fathers are building up closer relationships with their children and women and men are on a more equal footing in the workplace. The parental leave system has however not made the gender pay gap smaller.

The Gender Pay Gap

Women had 66.5% of men's total employment income in 2012, according to tax returns. According to a study in 2008 the gendered pay gap was 16.3%. A recent study shows that men are 80% of CEOs, executive manager. The Government continues to develop policies and promote initiatives that focus on decreasing the gender pay gap and its causes. This includes: Increased research on the gender pay gap and its causes. An Equal-pay standard has been developed which will be tested by different companies and institutions in 2014.

Gender in the Arctic

In 2014 Iceland is chairing the Nordic Council of Ministers. One of the issues being stressed is gender equality in the Arctic. Climate change will most likely bring both positive and negative changes to the area affecting the lives of both women and men. It is necessary to discuss gender equality in order to deal with the forthcoming changes. The Icelandic government will be initiating a dialog on gender equality in the Arctic, focusing on equal participation, policy making, access to resources, health and economic and social development in the area.

Gender and Climate Change

The Icelandic government has for many years stressed the importance of gender in dealing with climate change, knowing that climate change affects women and men in a different way and also that women and men affect the climate differently with their daily behaviour and work. Gender must be taken into account in negotiations about future climate policies and women must be represented equally to men in the negotiations as well as in decision making all over the world. The Icelandic government is determined to continue its work on securing that gender and climate change will get the attention it deserves.